



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**TAJIKISTAN**

## FIRST PERSON

# The Power of Example

**A USAID program alumna becomes a role-model for her community.**



*"After my trip to the U.S., I have become more confident in promoting gender equality. I saw that women there are so active. We should also be more active."*

*Farogat Mumindzanova, alumna of the USAID Community Connection program, Khatlon Oblast, Tajikistan*

*Photo: Community Connections*

Farogat Mumindzanova comes from a very traditional community in the south of Tajikistan, where the role of women is usually limited to maintaining the household and rearing the children. After the 1993-1998 civil war, when many women across the country became widowed, Farogat found herself questioning this status quo. "We need women voices both in the private and the public life," says Farogat. Together with other like-minded people at the NGO Mehrangez in a small town of Bohtar, Khatlon Oblast, she promotes women's rights to participate in public life.

Last year, Farogat was selected as a participant of the USAID Community Connections study tour for young women leaders. Together with other nine women she traveled to Ames, Iowa and spent three weeks learning how various organizations promote gender equality and increased women's role in the American society. She also had the opportunity to observe the Iowa State Fair at a presidential campaign rally. "I was amazed by the American election system. It is truly free and fair," says Farogat.

Upon her return to Tajikistan, Farogat shared her impressions about the U.S. with her family, friends, and community. She organized a seminar on advocacy for a group of women-leaders from various Bohtar community organizations and provided them with examples about the American women-leaders. Farogat has also worked on creating a new atmosphere within her NGO. Previously, the director did not consult with staff members. After returning from her study tour, Farogat suggested that all staff members should be heard. This created a different dynamic in the organization, as employees started to feel that they had a voice in the decision-making.

Thanks to her participation in the USAID program, Farogat became a role model and inspiration for the people in Bohtar. Many of her neighbors, witnessing how a woman from a small town in rural Tajikistan can make her way to the United States, also came to view the English language as one of the keys to success.

One of Farogat's future goals is to spearhead a program educating men on women's rights. "Women struggle for their rights everywhere," says Farogat. "Here in Tajikistan, though we do have rights on paper, women do not promote the practical application of those rights."